

New Consulate Outreach Efforts Coming in the New Year

In our continued effort to reach out and improve our service to American Citizens in Honduras, the Consular Section is planning a number of efforts early in the New Year that will increase our public outreach. In addition to continuing our bi-monthly newsletter, the Consulate will be planning town hall meetings, outreach programs to specific communities, and informational programs through the Honduran media.

Early in the New Year the Consular Section's newly arrived Deputy Consul General, Rachel Schofer, will be conducting a series of town hall-style meetings. These meetings will primarily be focused on the North Coast and will be open to all American Citizens to ask questions and voice concerns to the Embassy. Through these meetings we hope to hear from you about the issues that are facing the American citizen community and suggestions on how we can help.

Additionally, the consular staff will be establishing directed outreach programs with some specific American citizen communities that have consistent service needs from the Consulate. We will be starting with the servicemen and women at Palmerola Airbase and the Peace Corps Volunteers around Honduras.

For those of you living in Roatan, Consul General Ian Brownlee will be participating on the *Roatan Bruce* radio call-in show on December 28th. Those who are listeners of the show or have concerns regarding issues in Roatan are encouraged to listen and call in.

We hope that you are finding the newsletter informative and helpful, and that you encourage fellow American residents or visitors in Honduras to register with the Embassy. Registration can be completed at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>

Ian Brownlee, Consul General

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Town Hall Meeting

Comayagua

Jan. 10th, 2007

Staff from the Consular Section will be conducting a town hall meeting in Comayagua on January 10th, 2007. The exact location and time are still being determined and will be sent out via e-mail soon. All American citizens are welcome to attend.

Non-Immigrant Visas – Hondurans Visiting the U.S.

In the last edition of *American Accent* we highlighted a number of issues that face the American citizen community in Honduras regarding the Immigrant Visa Process. Due to the good reaction we got from that article, in this edition we will be highlighting some concerns and issues regarding the tourist visa process. We understand that many Americans residing here in Honduras would like to have their family or friends visit them when they are in the U.S., and are eager to understand how the tourist visa process works. Like last month, this article is not meant to explain the entire process, but is meant to highlight some specific issues that, in our

experience, face the American citizen community in Honduras as a whole.

Process Overview

All Hondurans applying for tourist visas must begin the process by purchasing an appointment for an interview at one of the many Banco Atlantida branches around Honduras. Once they have an appointment, they must fill out an Electronic Visa Application Form (EVAF), print it out, and bring it with them along with the other supporting documents, on the day of their interview.

Tourist Visas, cont.

On the day of their appointment, they should be sure to bring all of their supporting documents (bank statements, tax statements, property documents, school records, birth certificates, marriage certificates, etc.) to the interview. It is important to remember that under U.S. immigration law, all applicants for tourist visas are presumed to be intending immigrants (and are therefore ineligible) until they can prove that they have such strong ties outside of the U.S., that they would be compelled to leave the U.S. after a short visit. While we understand that this requirement can sometimes be difficult to prove, it cannot be waived by the interviewing officer.

Additionally, all applicants must qualify based on their own situations and on their own ties. While applicants often have friends or relatives in the United States that are promising to support them, the law is clear that all applicants must qualify on their own. In order to make the fairest assessment, the interviewing officer may ask to speak to all adult applicants separately.

Applicants that are denied under the intending immigration section of immigration law, are not permanently ineligible for a visa, and may reapply at any time. Applicants whose visas are approved, will not receive their passports with their visas until about four or five days after their interview.

Points to Remember

- While we understand that many American citizens have the best intentions when inviting Hondurans or other foreigners to visit the U.S., the interviewing officer must still make a determination about the applicant's own ties

to their home country before they can approve a visa. An invitation or logical purpose of travel may not be sufficient to approve a visa in all cases.

- Americans who wish to have children visit them must ensure that the biological parents of the children who will be traveling are present at the interview. Without the presence of both parents and the birth certificate, a visa may not be issued.
- Americans who wish to sponsor a Honduran child's studies in the U.S. should familiarize themselves with the student visa process. More information regarding F1 (student) visas can be found at: <http://educationusa.state.gov/>
- American families who are seeking to adopt Honduran children that will reside in the U.S. need to go through the Immigrant Visa process and should not normally apply for tourist visas for the children they are seeking to adopt (even if the adoption will take place in the U.S.). For more information on adoptions go to: http://www.travel.state.gov/family/adoption/info/info_458.html

For more general information regarding the visa process you can visit:

<http://www.travel.state.gov>

<http://www.uscis.gov>

<http://honduras.usembassy.gov>

Contributed by: Non-Immigrant Visa Section

New Rules for Air Travel to the U.S.

Starting on January 23, 2007, all travelers traveling by air to the United States must have a valid passport to enter or re-enter the United States. This new rule will be the first phase of the implementation of The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which will be expanded in January 2008 to include all travelers entering by sea and land.

WHTI will require all travelers to and from Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda to present a passport or other accepted document that establishes the bearer's identity and nationality to enter or re-enter the United States. The goal is to strengthen border security and facilitate entry into the United States for U.S. citizens and legitimate international travelers.

Under WHTI, U.S. Citizens may use the following as valid travel documentation:

- U.S. Passport: U.S. citizens may present a valid U.S. passport when traveling via air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda, and may also use

a U.S. passport when traveling via sea and land borders (including ferry crossings).

- The Passport Card (also referred to as the PASS Card): This limited-use passport in card format is currently under development and will be available for use for travel only via land or sea (including ferries) between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. Similar in size to a credit card, it will fit easily into a wallet.
- DOS and DHS also anticipate that the following documents will continue to be acceptable for their current travel uses under WHTI: SENTRI, NEXUS, FAST, and the U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Document. As proposed, members of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty traveling on orders will continue to be exempt from the passport requirement.

The Consulate continues to encourage all Americans be sure that they have valid American passports.

Contributed by: American Citizen Services



For information on WHTI go to:

<http://www.travel.state.gov>

Organization Profile: The Cornerstone Foundation



In our continuing effort to recognize the contributions that Americans are making here in Honduras, each issue we are profiling American organizations working to help Hondurans. We encourage other organizations to submit profiles to us for future editions. This month's organization is the Cornerstone Foundation.

The Cornerstone Foundation, an American 501(C)(3) non-profit organization, along with its Honduran non-profit counterpart, Asociacion Peidra Angular de Honduras (APAH),

established in 1994 and granted non-profit status by the Honduran government in 1999, operate and run Hospital Loma de Luz in Balfate on the northern coast of Honduras.

The founders are Dr. Jeff and Rosanne McKenney. Dr. Jeff brings experience as a general, vascular and thoracic surgeon and his wife, Rosanne, is a registered nurse. They felt called to build and start a missions hospital and asked the government of Honduras where they could build a hospital that would serve the most under-served people of Honduras. The government responded – Balfate, a remote area on the northern coast of Honduras, where

there was no medical care available.

Construction began in 1994 on the infrastructure and hospital construction was completed in 2002. In 2006, APAH, (the “sin fines de lucro” governing Hospital Loma de Luz), signed a “convenio” with the Secretary of Health for the Hospital to function as part of the network of Public Health Facilities while retaining its own autonomy. Hospital Loma de Luz, is one of the few health facilities in Honduras to receive, on its own merits, official licensure as a level 2 hospital under the current, stringent health regulations. The modern hospital maintains a busy out-patient clinic, surgery, inpatient services and 24 hour emergency services in an area which serves approximately 70,000 people, where there are approximately 54 villages, and in which only 11 of which are serviced by some form of vehicle passable road. Annually the hospital serves between 15,000 – 20,000 patients with follow-up. Fifty American missionaries, which include family members, serve at Hospital Loma de Luz.

For more information on volunteering or to contribute you can contact the organization at:



Hospital Loma de Luz is located in Balfate, Colon on the North Coast of Honduras

The Cornerstone Foundation

www.crstone.org

Our address: 18384 West Lake Drive, Saucier, MS 39574

Telephone: (228) 328-1579

Contributed by: Cornerstone Foundation

Letters to the Editor

Dear American Accent Staff,

I have a question about something stated in this newsletter (on page 2, Aug/Sept vol 1, issue 3) about Americans applying for immigrant visa for family.

My husband and I are currently going through this process and he has been there for over a year now. We have no idea when or if he will be allowed back so we have considered me going to reside in Honduras.

In the newsletter it stated that Americans applying for residencies for their family must reside in US or demonstrate that they are immediately intending to take up residency in the US. How would one “demonstrate” this? If I did decide to reside in Honduras we would definitely becoming home as soon as my husband was issued his visa but I'm not sure how I am expected to demonstrate this. In the case that I went to Honduras I just want to be fully prepared and avoid and set backs in our process.

Staff Response:

First, we want to thank this reader for their question and input, and we recognize that this is a concern for many Americans who are petitioning residency visas for their family members.

In this case, we would advise the family to not be overly concerned with the residency requirement. Immigration law does allow for Americans who are currently residing outside of the U.S. to petition for their family members, provided that they can demonstrate that they will immediately taking up residency in the U.S. with their family.

It is important to remember, however, that the residency requirement for Americans who are seeking residency for their family members exists for a few of reasons. One, is that the purpose of these visas is to reunite families and to maintain family unity. Secondly, all Americans who petition for a family member's residency, must sign legal documents in which they promise to support the immigrant financially in the U.S. For these documents to be enforceable, the applicant must be residing in the U.S.

Letters cont.

With that said, we certainly understand the difficulty that some families face during the immigrant visa process. We have noticed that situations like this one most often occur when applicants have previously entered and lived in the United States illegally.

According to U.S. immigration law, those who have illegally lived in the U.S. for more than six months after April 1, 1997 (the date at which this law went into effect) may be ineligible to enter the U.S. for a period of up to ten years. This same law says that American's who have spouses or children that would be affected by this section of law, may petition the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for a waiver of this penalty. Unfortunately, because there are so many of these types of cases, the waiting time just to get a decision for a waiver is currently averaging six to nine months. During this time, the immigrant remains ineligible to enter the U.S.

While we understand that the immigrant visa process can be very long, especially when a waiver of an ineligibility is needed, these delays are often an unfortunately consequence of maintaining a legal and fair process for all. We strongly encourage all who are considering petitioning for a family member's residency, to start the process as early as possible.

(Editor's note: Days after receiving this letter, we received the approved waiver for the spouse and issued a visa.)

Dear American Accent Staff,

I have a question regarding "Central American Immigration Agreement to American Visitors and Residents". I am a legal resident of Honduras, and a U. S. citizen. My wife is a Nicaraguan citizen. In the past, we traveled across the border every three month to get my wife another 3 month visa. It appears that this new law will keep U.S. citizens from hop-

ping the border every three months. Since Nicaragua and Honduras are signatories, and this law was designed to facilitate travel, will Nicaraguans be able to come and go for indefinite periods of time? Is there no longer a requirement for my wife to leave the country every 3 months? If there is still a requirement for her to leave every three months, can she leave for any country that is not a signatory? How long must she stay outside Honduras?

If you are unable to answer these questions, could you please provide me with an email address to the person at the Honduran immigration office or with the person at the Nicaraguan consulate who can answer these questions for me?

Staff Response

While the new immigration agreement between the CA-4 countries (Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala) does intend to facilitate travel, it does not create a common immigration union, nor does it confer automatic residency rights to those who are citizens of a participating nation. Citizens of participating countries would continue to normally be given three months to remain as tourists in other participating nations.

Additionally, American's who find themselves in similar situations should contact Honduran immigration officials. They can sometimes give extensions (usually for another thirty days) to foreigners who will be staying for longer than three months. It is also important to note, that those who overstay there permission to stay in Honduras can be heavily fined when they attempt to leave the country.

The Embassy strongly recommends that all Americans ensure that they are maintaining a legal status during their stay in the Honduras.

Contributed by: American Accent Staff

Dengue Fever Reminder

As you may already know, there have been many recent reports of Dengue Fever in Honduras. In Tegucigalpa there have been 110 reported cases with 8 cases of hemorrhagic dengue and one pediatric death.

During the past thirty years the world has witnessed an astonishing increase in the incidence of dengue fever. About 100 million people are infected with the dengue virus yearly, with more than 250,000 developing dengue hemorrhagic fever, and 25,000 dying from the illness. Dengue fever occurs in the tropics and subtropics, between 25 degrees north and 25 degrees south of the equator, which exposes about 2.5 billion people to dengue infection. The incidence of dengue fever in the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and northern South America has increased several-hundred fold in the past three decades. Urbanization, air travel, and inadequate mosquito control programs are factors promoting the spread of dengue fever. Dengue fever has become the second most common cause for hospitalization of tourists who have traveled to tropical areas.

Due to these recent cases, the Embassy would like to remind American citizens of the usual symptoms of Dengue Fever, and to encourage them to be mindful of this illness.

The symptoms for **ADULTS** are very obvious:

- High fever (104 Farenheit or above)
- Headache
- Muscle and bone pain
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- A pinpoint red rash that blanches may start on the trunk and spread outward.
- Small purplish spots (petechiae) may occur on the extremities.
- The illness lasts 1 -2 weeks.

The symptoms for **CHILDREN** may be more insidious:

- The temperature may not be as high

Dengue Fever Reminder cont.

- They may be very cranky and irritable
- Vomiting can be more prevalent.

If a child or an adult has the more severe form, Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever, the symptoms are very obvious and you will know that you or your child is very sick.

Prevention is the BEST method to combat Dengue Fever.

- Use DEET insect repellent liberally, both when indoors and outdoors
- Long sleeve shirts and pants
- Check screens and windows
- Eliminate standing water

Using DEET on Children

The recommendations for kids' using insect repellants containing DEET have changed, allowing higher concentrations than before.

Within the last year, the Committee on Environmental Health of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concluded

that products containing DEET at a concentration of 30% are as safe as products containing only 10% when used as directed. The main difference between the different level of concentrations is the length of time that they remain active. A 10% preparation works for about 2 hours, while a 24% preparation lasts for about 5 hours.

It makes sense to select the lowest concentration for the amount of time your child will be exposed to insects. Generally, DEET should not be applied more than once a day and is not recommended at all in babies younger than 2 months. It may be sprayed on clothing, but should not be used under clothing, over broken skin, or on the hands of children who may put their hands in their mouths. Avoid spraying DEET while indoors or near food. And once your child is back indoors for the rest of the day, wash their skin with soap and water and launder any treated clothing.

Contributed by: Embassy Health Unit

Sexual Assault Awareness

Sexual violence is a worldwide problem. Everywhere in the world, sexual assault/rape is the most violent crime against a person, short of homicide. It can be motivated by a sense of powerlessness, the need to humiliate others, and is a violation of a person's personal space. Experiencing sexual assault/rape can transform a person and can change their lives forever.

The denial syndrome is alive and well both in the United States and overseas. Many people think that sexual assault/rape cannot happen to them. The fact is that sexual assault/rape can happen to anyone regardless of age, race, social class, personal appearance, or sex. Most sexual assault/rape victims report that they had a sense that something was wrong but did not trust their instincts.

A common misconception is that sexual assault/rape only happens in dark parking lots, unoccupied buildings, and unpopulated areas. While the crime does occur in these areas, several of the most recently reported incidents have occurred in the victim's home. Statistics reveal that about half of all people who are sexually assaulted/raped knew the person who attacked them. When forced sex occurs between two people who already know each other, it is called date rape or acquaintance rape.

The majority of sexual assault/rape cases are not reported to law enforcement officials. It is estimated that for every sexual assault/rape reported, 10-20 go unreported. Humiliation is cited as one of the main reasons for not reporting these crimes. Although a majority of sexual assault/rape victims are women, men have also been the victims of sexual assault/rape, both in the United States and overseas.

Reporting the crime and seeking medical assistance is essential to the well-being and recovery of sexual assault/rape

victims. Treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and testing for pregnancy is strongly recommended.

Alcohol is often involved in date rape or acquaintance rape. Drinking can loosen inhibitions, dull common sense, and for some people allow aggressive tendencies to surface. Drugs may also play a role, especially "date rape" drugs like Roofies, GHB, and Ketamine. Drugs can easily be mixed into drinks to make a person black out and forget things that happen.

Date Rape Prevention Tips:

- Avoid secluded places (this may mean your room or your partner's) until you trust your partner.
- Don't spend time alone with someone who makes you feel uneasy or uncomfortable. This means following your instincts and removing yourself from situations you don't feel good about.
- Stay sober and aware. If you're with someone you don't know very well, be aware of what's going on around you and try to stay in control.
- Know what you want. Be clear about what kind of relationship you want with the other person. If you are not sure, ask the other person to respect your feelings and give you time. Don't allow yourself to be subject to peer pressure or encouraged to do something you don't want to do.
- Go out with a group of friends and watch out for each other.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel threatened.

Prevention Tips for Date Rape Drugs/Drinks:

- Always order your own drinks and watch them being made. Drugs can be slipped into both alcoholic and non-alcoholic

Sexual Assault Awareness cont.

- drinks at parties or in bars without a person knowing.
- Don't accept open drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) from others who you don't know or do not trust; this includes drinks that come in glass.
- When in bars or clubs always get your drink directly from the bartender and do not take your eyes off the bartender or your order; don't let somebody go to the bar for you.
- At parties, only accept drinks in closed containers; bottles, cans, or tetra packs.
- Don't drink anything that tastes or smells strange. GHB tastes salty.
- Never leave your drink unattended or turn your back on your table.
- Do not drink from open beverage sources like punch bowls, pitchers or tubs.
- Keep your eyes and ears open; if there is talk of date rape drugs or if a friend seems "too intoxicated" for what they have taken, leave the party or club immediately.

Sexual Assault/Rape Prevention Tips for the Home:

- Lock doors and windows
- Do not admit strangers
- Close drapes to prevent surveillance
- Report suspicious activity to the police
- Keep areas around the home well lit
- If you have an alarm, use it
- Be alert to behavioral changes of invited guests, especially if alone

Sexual Assault/Rape Prevention Tips for the Vehicle:

- Control access to your vehicle

- Always lock your doors while driving
- Never pick up hitchhikers
- Keep vehicle properly maintained
- Park in well lit areas
- Check the back seat
- Know safehavens along the way

Sexual Assault/Rape Prevention Tips for Public Places:

- Walk with confidence
- Don't flaunt valuables
- Travel in groups
- Wear clothing that helps you blend in
- Stay in well lit areas
- Be aware of your surroundings
- If followed, seek a crowded area

Unfortunately, even if someone takes every precaution, sexual assaults/rape/date rape can still happen.

If you are a victim, here are some things you can do:

- If you're injured, go straight to the emergency room.
- Call or find a family member, friend, or someone you feel safe with and tell them what happened.
- If you want to report the sexual assault/rape, call the police right away. Preserve all the physical evidence. Don't change clothes or wash.
- Write down as much information as you can remember about the event.
- If you aren't sure what to do, don't be afraid to ask questions and get information.

Contributed by: Embassy Regional Security Office

American Accent is Seeking Reader Input

We continue to hope that through this newsletter, Americans can stay in better contact with the Embassy and the rest of the American community throughout Honduras. In our effort to improve this newsletter and make it more useful to our American community, the *American Accent* staff is seeking your submissions of:

Letters to the Editor: In order to more adequately address the concerns that members of the American community have, we welcome contributions to the "Letters to the Editor" section of the newsletter. Any American who has questions or concerns that they think could also benefit the American community as a whole, are encouraged to submit letters. The *American Accent* staff will try to print and respond to those letters that deal with issues affecting the entire American community.

Organizational Profiles: In past editions we have highlighted a number of charity and non-profit organizations through which Americans are working to assist Honduras. We welcome other organizations to submit a short (150-300 word) description of their group to the newsletter. In each future edition, we will highlight a different group.

Other Articles: If you have another topic that you believe would be of interest to the American community, feel free to submit your ideas to the *American Accent* staff. Articles should be between 150 to 300 words in length.

Contributed by: American Accent Staff

United States
Embassy

Consular Section

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or (504) 238-5114

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Website: [http://](http://honduras.usembassy.gov)

honduras.usembassy.gov

American Citizens Services

Phone: (504) 238-5114 ext. 4400

Fax: (504) 238-4357

Email: usahonduras@state.gov

Please register with us at:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>

Have you seen us?

If you have any information on the following missing Americans in Honduras, please call the American Citizens Services Unit of the Consulate at (504) 238-5114 extension 4400. All information will be kept confidential.



EDUARDO BRAGA

DOB: March 20, 1964

Hair Color: Black

Gender: Male

Eye Color: Black

Age now: 42 yrs.

Missing Date: August 3, 2004



JAMES P. MAHER

DOB: December 15, 1944

Hair Color: Brown/Gray

Gender: Male

Eye Color: Blue

Age now: 62 yrs.

Missing Date: August 3, 2004



STEVEN L. WARNER

AKA Julian Warner

DOB: January 3, 1960



Hair Color: Auburn

Gender: Male

Eye Color: Blue

Age now: 46 yrs.

Missing Date: December 3, 2004



ALAN L. PUTTERMAN

DOB: January 6, 1938

Hair Color: Grey

Gender: Male

Eye Color: Blue

Age now: 68 yrs.

Missing Date: August 27, 2004

Height: 6'

Missing City: San Pedro

